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Making Partnerships Work

Top Tips for Relationship Building

NHS Finance Skills Development

In the summer of 2013 FSD commissioned a piece of research to identify the competencies which will enable finance individuals and teams to excel in the new NHS landscape.

As a result of this research it was recognised that finance needs to be more business focused, more entrepreneurial, more creative and more relationship orientated than ever before.

This top tips flyer will give you advice on how to develop strong relationships and influence clinicians and other partners.

Why build strong relationships at work?

The Health and Safety Executive cite healthy relationships as one of the most important factors contributing to a positive work environment, and these relationships have many benefits:

- When we work with others we tend to bounce ideas off each other. We become more creative in our thinking and our solutions.
- We are more productive as we work to jointly agreed deadlines to deliver.
- The quality of our work tends to be higher as we understand what others need from us.
- We are happier in our work as we recognise the positive contribution it makes to others and/or the organisation.
- People are more likely to go along with changes that you want to implement.

Who do you need to have strong relationships with?

If we had to invest time in building and maintaining strong relationships with everyone we came into contact with, we might never actually get any work done. So it's worth spending a few minutes considering who you need to build strong relationships with.

Think about the key responsibilities of your job. Write a list of those who you need to work with in order to fulfil those responsibilities.

Once you have identified these important people, you can develop positive, productive relationships that achieve success.

> All lasting business is built on relationships
>
> Albert A Montapert, Author

How to Build Strong Relationships

1 Understand the other person

We are all different. With some people we just seem to click and feel like we've know them for ages, whereas with others we don't really "get them" and it takes a lot of effort even to have a single conversation. Blake and Mouton developed a model which helps us to identify four typical behavioural styles of people:

Consider the traits of those people you need to have strong relationships with. Think about how they do things, what their e-mails are like, what they focus on in meetings. Which behavioural style do you think they are?

You might also want to take this opportunity to think about your own style. Think about the way you do things in the workplace. Can you identify how you come across to others?

Amiable	Expressive
• Exercises caution in decision making. • Likes close personal relationships. • Dislikes conflict. • Supports and actively listens to others. • Has ability to gain support from others. • Works well with others. • Relationship based. • Values co-operation. • Likes others to feel included. • Supportive. • Patient. • Diplomatic. • Conforms. • No task-time boundaries.	• Spontaneous actions and decisions. • Likes involvement. • Dislikes being alone. • Tendency to dream. • Jumps from one activity to another. • Works quickly with others. • Can exaggerate and generalise. • Enthusiastic. • Intuition based. • Values enthusiasm. • Likes to shape the future with others. • Imaginative. • Good communicator. • Future focused.
Analytical	**Driver**
• Cautious actions and decisions. • Likes organisation and structure. • Dislikes too much involvement with others. • Prefers objective work. • Attention to accuracy. • Relies on facts/data collection. • Prefers to work alone. • Thinking based. • Thorough. • Disciplined. • Values information. • Likes to know the rules. • Perfectionist. • Past focused.	• Decisive actions and decisions. • Likes control of people and situations. • Dislikes inaction. • Prefers maximum freedom to manage. • Cool, independent, competitive. • Low tolerance for feelings of others. • Works quickly alone. • Works to deadlines. • Values overcoming problems. • Independent. • Decisive. • Determined. • Single-minded. • Present focused.

2 Be flexible in your approach

Having identified their style, you can adapt your approach to ensure you make a positive impact. Below are some top tips for approaching someone in a way that works for them:

When communicating with an **Amiable** type focus on **PEOPLE**	When communicating with an **Expressive** type focus on the **FUTURE**
• Break the ice - it shows your commitment to the task and to them. • Listen and be responsive. Take your time. Learn the whole story. • Be non-threatening, casual, and informal, they won't like a commanding style. • Ask 'how' questions to draw out their opinions. • Define what you want them to contribute to the task.	• Meet their social needs while talking shop. Entertain, stimulate, and be lively. • Talk about their goals as well as the teams'. • Ask for their opinions and ideas. • Keep your eye on the future and big picture, not the technical details. • Support your points with examples involving people they know and respect.
When communicating with an Analytical type, focus on PROCESS	**When communicating with a Driver type, focus on ACTION**
• Prepare your case in advance. • Take your time, but be persistent. • Support their principles. Show that you value their thoughtful approach. • Draw up a scheduled action plan, and be specific on roles and responsibilities. • Be clear. Disorganisation or sloppiness in presentation is a definite turn-off. • Follow through – never break your word, because they will remember.	• Be brief and to the point. Think 'action and efficiency'. • Stick to business, skip the chit-chat. • Be prepared. Know the requirements and objectives of the task at hand. • Organise your arguments and present your facts cleanly and logically. • Ask specific questions. Do not go 'fishing' for answers. • When finishing, leave. No loitering.

> Never judge a person until you've walked a mile in their shoes
>
> Native American Indian proverb

How to Build Strong Relationships

3 Appreciate their world

If you've ever watched one of those TV documentaries where senior managers take on clerical, manual or customer-facing roles in their businesses, you will know how effective those experiences are in providing the senior managers with a fresh perspective. The experiences often lead to new initiatives to improve morale and improve business levels.

Spending some time getting to know the environment of those with whom you need to have a strong relationship will ensure you can communicate with them in an effective way, as well as ensure you deliver what they need. It will also have the added bonus of establishing your credibility as they acknowledge the effort you are making.

TIPS Here are some suggestions for getting to know other environments:

- Ask if you can spend an hour shadowing their environment after your next meeting. It will help you understand how things work in their department.
- Listen out for the language they use and build it into your written and verbal language.
- Ask them to describe a typical day, or a typical week. You might find that the reason you don't get a quick reply to emails is that they only spend a few minutes at their desk each day!
- Find out what matters to them. What are their key deliverables or KPIs? What is their biggest priority right now? What are they finding challenging at the moment?

4 Respond to their values

We all have values. They are the things that matter to us most of all, and the standards that we use to judge others. Typically, in a working relationship, we want:

- Reliability – we want to know that we can trust someone to do what they have said they will do.
- Responsiveness – we want to know that things will be done in a timely fashion; meeting deadlines and showing flexibility when required.
- Accuracy – we need to rely on others to get things right first time and produce work that is of a high standard.
- Openness – we like to know where we stand. If a piece of work is going to be late, we'd rather know early so we can plan.
- Simplicity – we like things to be straightforward, so things like reports are easy to read and processes are easy to follow.
- Empathy – we want to be treated as people, to be listened to and understood.

TASK Ask those with whom you need to have a strong relationship what is important to them. From this, you can agree some standards between you, such as holding regular meetings to update on progress, or producing early drafts of reports.

> "You can do what I cannot do.
> I can do what you cannot do.
> Together we can do great things."
>
> Mother Theresa

5 Be positive in your approach

Focus on being positive. Positivity is attractive and contagious, and it will help strengthen your relationships at work. Of course there has to be some realism about what can be delivered, but on the whole you should talk about what you can do, rather than what you can't.

TIPS

Here are some words and phrases that create that positivity:

Create Confidence – Being certain about what you can provide makes a big impact.	***I will***…*"I will call you back before 10.30am tomorrow." Rather than "I'll try and get back to you before 10.30 tomorrow."* ***I can***… *"I can provide that information."* ***I'm going to***…*"I'm going to explore that in more detail."*
Softening the "I'm right" message – We sometimes know the right answer, but it's not always helpful to let others think that we know best.	***In my experience it works well when***… *"In my experience it works well when we have a planning meeting at the start of the day." (rather than "you ought to have a planning meeting at the start of the day.")* ***I have found that it doesn't work as well if***…*"I have found that it doesn't work as well if the key customers aren't involved." (rather than "you ought to get the key customers involved.")*
Offer Options – People like to have a choice in what they do, rather than have solutions imposed on them.	***Another way to try it would be***… *"Another way to try this would be to send out a flyer to everyone."* ***One thing you could do***…*"One thing you could do would be to send a flyer out to everyone."*
I Messages – This is helpful when providing feedback to those we work with.	***I noticed that***…*"I noticed that you looked at the ground when you were presenting."* ***I think it would be best if*** …*"I think it would be best for the project if we looked at this together."*

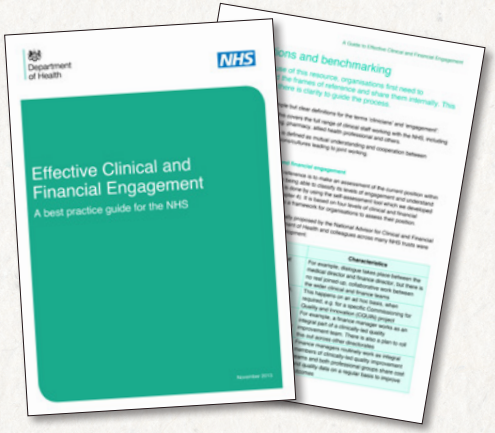
6 Appreciate Others

And finally, show your appreciation to your work colleagues. Everyone wants to feel that their contribution is appreciated. So, genuinely compliment the people around you when they do something well, say "thank you" when someone sends some information that's useful to you, and feed back to people the positive difference that their contribution makes to the task and the team. This will open the door to strong and lasting relationships.

So in conclusion what do others want from Finance.

- A shared vision and culture
- Passion and interest
- Effective communication, a shared language and understanding
- A willingness to listen and help
- The delivery of accurate and timely data that is well presented
- Visibility, approachability and an open manner
- Partnership working with joint decision making leading to a sense of shared purpose to improving patient care

To find out more access a best practice guide for the NHS on Effective Clinical and Financial Engagement - available to download from the library at **www.fsdnetwork.com**



The NHS Finance Skills Development (FSD) Network operates across all NHS organisations in England. Its remit is to facilitate, through learning and development, the improvement of finance and business skills and competences in the NHS and the development of the finance function.

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The FSD Network uses a dedicated website, **www.fsdnetwork.com,** to publicise and support its work. The website is the primary source of information and learning resources for all finance skills development needs. The FSD Network continues to support all NHS finance staff in their ongoing learning and development.

FSD activities are centred on:

- Professional Education and Qualifications
- Lifelong Learning and Continuing Professional Development
- Talent Management
- Career Development for the Finance Function
- Widening and Improving Financial Skills
- Achieving Excellence

This document has been produced in conjunction with Aspire Development Ltd. Aspire has significant experience of working with individuals and teams in the NHS to support their personal and business performance.

If you want to discuss how Aspire can help you and your team to develop successful relationships at work, then please call us on 01422 241964, or visit the Aspire website at www.aspiredevelopment.co.uk

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